



PORTALS

VOLUME XII SPRING, 1983

PORTALS

PURDUE UNIVERSITY
NORTH CENTRAL
STUDENT WRITING

Sponsored by
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Volume 12 Spring 1983

FOREWORD

In this issue of *PORTALS* are the prize-winning entries of the 12th Annual Purdue University North Central Writing Contest, sponsored by the English Department and funded from proceeds of the Goliard Book Sale. Publication is made possible through the support of the Student Senate.

Contest rules stipulate that all work submitted to the Freshman Division be written in freshman composition classes, while entries for the Open Division may be creative writing or papers written in any other course at PNC. Entries are coded and rated anonymously by both student and faculty judges in terms of clarity of thought and expression, technical expression, and stylistic excellence.

When *Portals* was established twelve years ago, it was hoped that its content would reflect a truly representative cross-section of the Purdue University North Central student body with its special mixture of part-time, full-time, young, and not-so-young scholars. We believe that this issue continues the tradition of providing a sample of the variety of responses an open door to education can evoke.

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Mrs. Cathy Buckman

COVER PHOTO BY: Mike Trzcinski

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“CRUNCHER COMES OUT”

Kathleen M. Czizek is currently a second semester freshman at PNC, and she lives at 3212 Salem Court, Michigan City.

Billy Edwards was plenty worried. Of all his peers who jammed the grey-enameled dance floor of the U.S. Coast Guard Armory Station No. 274, he was the only one without luck or influence. The humid, super-saturated atmosphere peculiar to a northern Indiana summer's night flooded Billy's sinuses, giving him a headache the size of Detroit. He was knocking back the Tequila Sunrises pretty fast, but the ache wouldn't budge from his temples. Billy was a fine example of a small-town, high-school graduate who still lived at home. He sported a freshly mowed and laundered "Leave it to Beaver" haircut. His hulking football frame was tucked into a money-green Izod polo shirt with matching green go-to-hell slacks that had little red whales printed on them. The little whales, however, really should have been miniature iron ore barges, for several reasons: the number one reason was Daddy Edwards supervised the unloading of such said barges that bore the fuel that fed the Basic Oxygen Process Furnaces No.'s eight through sixteen at the U.S. Steel Gary Works. Secondly, there have never been any *confirmed* sightings of whales on Lake Michigan or, for that matter, anywhere within 960 miles of Billy's neighborhood. But, he wasn't concerned about the scarcity of whales in the heartland as he wiped his sweaty palms on his sweaty cheeks. What he was worried about was the fact that he was now twenty-three and three-quarters of an hour late for and, in fact, had missed the bus that was to carry him to his boot camp. Also, he knew that Captain Windrush would be looking for him.

There was only one thing to do. Billy had spent much of the past two weeks, since receiving his salutation from the armed forces, pondering the scant information printed on the reverse side of his official invitation to combat. He found listed: where, when, and to whom he should report. His final destination, however, was not mentioned. Billy, although not a clever or even a particularly imaginative or inventive person, could see the handwriting on the wall.

The year was 1968. It was the year in which President Nixon would drop more bombs on Vietnam than any other leader had dropped on any other land in the entire history of the world. Billy did some research. He leafed through his father's mildewed copy of "The Uniform Code of Military Justice." Article 134 snagged his eye like a fishline from heaven. Billy discovered that he could be found unsuitable for military consideration by performing one or all "conduct of a nature to bring discredit upon the armed forces." With such a broad palette in his hand, Billy made up his mind. He was going to become a living stereotype. He was about to go underground in full view of the law.

Like a debutante waiting for her paramour, Billy waited for the inevitable arrival of Captain Windrush and his military police. He waited in plain sight, with the certain knowledge that he would be found. He was counting on it. He had chosen the most obvious place to locate a runaway youth in a small town, the Friday night dance. With military precision, Captain Windrush arrived ex-

actly at the tolling of Billy's twenty-fourth hour of absenteeism. He was now technically absent without leave.

Billy's arrestor hit the front door like a knight gone too long from his Lady Guinevere. Captain Windrush planted his bullet-like body in the center of the dancers and cocked his bullhorn to his lips, "Private Edwards. Private Billy Edwards, report to any of the Military Police Officers located at each of the exits, immediately." His no-neck head swiveled from side to side as he riveted his eyes on the dancers.

Billy leaped onto the bar, tore off his shirt and pants, and screamed, "Catch the cruncher" as he bolted for the main exit with a singlemindedness generally displayed only by spawning salmon, Captain Windrush was left in the dust with footprints on his face.

The shortest way to get to the pier from the Armory is to cut directly across the water of the basin. However, for anyone not equipped with a boat or a pair of Jesus shoes, the long route through the parking lot and down the catwalk is the only way to go. Take this walk on any day of any year, at any time of the day or night, in any century, past, present or future, and the same fishermen that were there yesterday, and the day before, and two days from now, will still be there. They will have the same sun and moon in their faces and will be forever casting into the same wind. The pier is where Captain Windrush and the military police caught up with The Cruncher. Somewhere between the Armory and the pier, he had slipped into a one-piece union suit the color of laundry water. The underwear was buttonless to the waist and stained under the arms with half-moon crescents that smelled suspiciously close to bilge. His jeans matched the faded blue water of his eyes. The space that used to be a zipper was held together by a large safety pin. The back pocket bore the indelible round outline of a Copenhagen tin that was coincidentally filled with both snuff and worms. His sockless feet were shod with torn rubber boots that sloshed faintly when he walked. A rain poncho, streaked with pigeon leavings, was slung over his right shoulder. A bright orange hunter's hat, with seven different sizes and styles of fishing lures, kept his hair under wraps. His eyes were glazed and vaguely unfocused. He needed a shave. He was obviously there to stay. Worst of all, he was munching on dead fish. He was actually wandering up and down the rocks pigging out on washed up coho, bloated perch, disdained alewives, and the occasional sun-dried smelt head left over from spring cleaning. When the good Captain found him, he was really going at it with two-fisted relish, munching and crunching and babbling, "Luncher, muncher, I'm The Cruncher," over and over between bites of fins and gills.

Captain Windrush, who was just back from Saigon, had never seen anything so disgusting in his thirty-six years of existence. He grabbed The Cruncher by the flaps of his buttonless shirt. "OK, kid," he growled through his clenched teeth, "we get the point. Even if you are just doing this because you're a spineless jellyfish and don't care a lick for your country, I still say you aren't man enough for this man's army. But, I'm telling you one thing right now. If you ever step off this pier, I'll know about it, and I will see to it that you spend the rest of your pointless life cleaning and filleting and eating every fish in

every ocean and lake and stream on this earth." Then, he and his men turned on their collective heels and vanished into the dark.

The Cruncher has been out on that pier since 1968. That was the year that saw Americans facing a price tag of seventy-eight million dollars a day in the pursuit of peace with honor in Vietnam. His mother still takes him a bag of peanut butter sandwiches and cans of Campbell's chicken noodle soup every couple of days. She doesn't know that he can't eat them because he never knows who is watching him. He just waits until she leaves and then uses the sandwiches and noodles for bait. The Cruncher might as well be buried in some rice paddy in the D.M.Z. But then, it's best not to look back and count the bodies.

"SMALL FRIENDS"

Denise L. Hoff, 2211 Maryben Avenue, Long Beach, Michigan City, is a transfer student from Lake Michigan College. She is currently a freshman in the school of technology, a computer technology major.

The older we become, the more we discover about ourselves. Some of our talents and abilities can be directly attributed to certain people and events in our lives. My son has opened doors I never knew were locked. He has played a large part in the development and proficiency of my art ability. And I have discovered for all the information, skills and values I've taught my son, he has also done his share in teaching me. But I will have to back up in time to explain how it was that I reached adulthood before those doors were unlocked.

During the 1950's and 1960's, as social change began brewing and erupted into upheaval, those changes did not filter down to the small, Midwestern, rigidly, Roman Catholic home in which I was raised. Roles for male and female were defined in absolutes. The OK list for my brothers was long; the "do not" list short. For my sister and me, our OK list was short, but the "good girls do not . . ." list seemed to go on and on. However, one difference between my elder sister and me on how the rules were applied developed when my mother was forced to return to work and discovered the cold, cruel reality of jobs for women. It was too late for my sister; too many years of home economics and general courses had not prepared her properly. I, on the other hand, was a perfect candidate. Armed with her new insight, my mother took

strict control over my curriculum. She insisted I take all the heavy courses to prepare me for college. It was also mandatory that I take “just in case” classes like shorthand and typing. This left no room for art or music; no matter that I showed potential. Although stress was college, the main purpose was not a master’s degree but a better “Mrs.” degree.

Sometimes, the careful plans parents lay out for their children have a tendency to backfire. And indeed, with me, backfire would be an understatement. I eloped during my junior year and started a family immediately.

Having children while still a child myself, I discovered I had no idea how to parent. While this was glaringly apparent to everyone else, it was a real revelation for me. And while this state of affairs had disadvantages, it also had its distinct advantages. One of the advantages was my son and I were friends before being parents and offspring. A more important advantage was each of us was so busy developing into who we were and who we wanted to be that we managed to avoid boxing each other into rigid roles. We were each other’s biggest fan and supporter. As friends, we allowed a greater variety of options and possibilities than we might have done under more traditional circumstances. Those possibilities have developed into precious gifts.

One of the gifts my son, Charly, now nine years old, has given me is art. With his own inherent talent, he has helped me to begin to tap my undeveloped artistic potential. In adapting to a congenital handicap, he has taught me the value of courage and the value of tenacity.

When Charly was born, it was immediately recognized he had vision problems. The specialists told us that his vision was so limited that, for all practical purposes, he was blind. Our first instinct was to over-protect him, however, we realized that over-protection could lead to a bigger handicap than his limited vision every would. We resolved that even though we would have to acknowledge his limitation —it was no reason to limit him. And what Charly wanted to do was draw. From the moment he could get his grubby little hands on a crayon, chalk, or pencil, my walls were in trouble. There was no way to keep him contained to paper, so we made a bargain; he could do whatever he wanted in his room, but the rest of the house was off limits. Even so, the bare white walls of the stairwell were occasionally too much temptation. The first lesson I learned with Charly was: “Crest toothpaste removes crayon marks.”

We discovered early that because his vision was so limited, when he did look at anything, he really looked. At the age of two, when his contemporaries drew a fire truck, for example, they drew a box with wheels, maybe a ladder; Charly, on the other hand, would have gauges and dials, spokes on wheels, hoses, and people complete with a burning building in the background. Now I knew he was good, but I also knew it was my mother pride beaming. However, as artist friends, and later teachers, continued to express their agreement, we encouraged him to try different mediums. It didn’t take much encouragement. Classes in watercolor, sculpture, pottery were just the beginning. His creativity flowed in many areas, so we added ballet, piano, tap dancing and drama classes. As I watched his progress, I acquired the courage to try myself. The discovery was exciting —a talent I never thought I had unfolded

before my eyes and, with each passing year, continues to improve.

Charly taught me the value of courage in a more basic, elementary way. At the age of 4 1/2, he could see for twelve to eighteen inches, depending on how large an item was. Right at that same time, (never knowing the wonderful significance it would impart) we had decided to "get healthy" by eliminating sugar and artificial additives, and by adding vitamins to our diets. At his next eye exam three months later, Charly tested out at four feet! Armed with his first improvement visually, Charly announced a few weeks later that he was ready for his first "big" bike, that he had outgrown the tricycle on the patio. The first bike in a child's life is a momentous occasion, with Charly even more so. It took several weeks and many stores to find just the right one. The bike he chose was small and blue in color. Much to our relief, he also wanted training wheels. The try-out day arrived on a typical day of February in Oklahoma, warm with the promise of spring. Charly, small and thin, walked the bike from the garage to the sidewalk with determination, defying the fear clutching at his heart. I held the bike to steady it as he mounted and started off. I then jogged along, continuing to steady the bike until he said he was ready, I let him go. As I forced myself to stand still and not rush after him to help, choking on words of caution, I was overwhelmed with emotion: terror, amazement and pride. In terror he'd lose control and hit a tree or car; in amazement at how well he was doing; and pride at his total courage. Even though he could see only four feet in front of himself, he was speeding down the sidewalk! When I stopped worrying and started cheering, I realized tears of joy were streaming down my face over his accomplishment. Those moments will always epitomize courage for me, and to this day, he is the most courageous person I've ever known.

Charly has also taught me the value of tenacity. Although he is a bright student, when he is doing his homework or art or learning a new skill, his limited vision requires him to work harder or spend more time. With calm acceptance, he continues to plug away until he's finished. He has yet to give up. Charly's vision has continued to improve; he can now see up to 20 feet away. The special diet and vitamin routine have long been a part of our life and will remain so, as will the values of courage and tenacity that Charly has developed and shared.

With natural talent locked away and courage and tenacity conditioned out of my personality by my parents, it was my son who held the key that opened those doors. The joys and trials of parenthood are known to us all, but unexpected treasure awaits us if we allow our children their own full potential. They have so much to teach us. Just leaving a restrictive home opened many opportunities, but the truth of the matter is I would not be the person I am today without the valuable contribution of my small son's generous spirit.

"THE SCHIZOPHRENIC CLOSET"

Judith Amm Miller is a freshman in the nursing program. She is employed at Sullair and resides at 1101 W. Porter, Chesterton, Indiana.

Opening my closet discloses me. I'm folded into the fabrics and tucked, heel and toe, in the shoes. Sometimes I close myself down into boxes.

Each item on the left side of my closet has work. My favorite wool skirt hangs where I can grab it, its camel color accumulating the weekly wear. It's my security blanket, warming me when my tummy hurts, protecting me when I have something new or difficult to do. Some days my bluejean skirt and I venture together into the fray; we are survivors. On other days I lovingly spare its poor threads. There are days, I admit, when I wonder what people think of woman who wears a skirt with a history.

I have shirts, jewels of silk, in sapphire, amethyst, turquoise and ruby. When I spend whole days in their royal splendor, they can hardly be persuaded to step aside for a night time granny gown. My passport black dress would travel anywhere at a moment's notice, if it could get clearance to depart the hanger. Next to it, pockety slacks, pressed into almost daily adventure, don't understand the nighttime madness of cloth that believes it is Marlene Dietrich, all dressed up with no place to go.

Clothes that are destined to spend time with me whisper when we meet in a store. They ask for me, knowing I never easily discard an old friend. When they are purchased, they hang around outside the closet door for awhile until they feel ready to weave their way in. My navy blue suit was like that. When I finally accepted its classic good looks, it rewarded me with uniform comfort and took each silk shirt to its heart.

My clothes aren't expected to worry about coordination, about appropriate accessories, or which colors become me. Colors are chosen for the ability to speak for themselves, but each has a little of its complement mixed in so it isn't too loud.

These clothes serve me, and I take them for granted as part of the warp and woof of my life. They have a way of suiting themselves to the occasion without having to consult me.

Shoes sit, row upon row, on the shelf on the left and discuss civilization and women's place in the world. Some are definitely of the opinion that I should be seen and hurt. They are losing ground lately to the ones who like to think they aren't too high to go anywhere or do anything.

My shoes are my pride. I love the leather; I love the sight and smell of the shine their colors take. Many of the styles now in my possession mimic those popular when I first had money to spend on shoes.

In winter the strappy little shoes, that were so anxious to be out and about, stay in their cozy compartments and dream of sunny days. Boots are the obvious answer for a person who can't be bothered by weather. When polished, my boots come alive in my hands, their leathery fragrance reminding me of how strong and worthy they are and how, though they will serve me no matter

what, I really should tend them better. If poverty catches me, if I have nothing, I shall have boots to the end.

The left side of my closet is orderly, with places for clothing, and places for shoes. I trust it; it puts me together and turns me out in minutes flat.

Be careful if you open the right side of my closet. Its odd overflow of small apartment living might fall out on you. Things tend to pile into baskets and bags and stuff themselves in, purposely filling every inch of spare space.

The top shelf chronicles whatever art is in my blood. The amateur emotions trapped in the stack haven't receded far enough in time for me to throw them away. On the very top new canvases, frightening in their whiteness, wait for a commitment.

Under the heap, spending life as a foundation, are heavy boxes of house and decorating magazines so musty and old they would stuff my head if I dared to page through them. They moved to my apartment on the arms of a strong friend who, just once, looked into a box to see under what he was laboring. He was such a good friend he carried them anyway. "I need them," I said, and I do. They are the paper houses I lusted after before I decided to live in the house in my head.

The inhabitants of the right side of my closet jostle and position themselves for the little attention they receive. I don't know what to do with them. They won't go away and they won't say why.

The right side of my closet is past, and maybe it's future. The left side sustains me every day. If you were to look at the doors of my closet at this very moment, the right side is closed; the left side is open.

"MY FATHER'S GREEN MOUNTAINS"

June Gavin, 238 W. 406 N., Valparaiso, Indiana, is originally from West Virginia. She is in the Bridge Program of the Community College and takes courses on a part-time basis.

I had finally reached the magic age of 21. I think I had lived all my teenage years waiting for just that very day. Now, I don't know why it was so important to me. At the time I had everything; I was carefree, young, and content, unaware of how fast one horrible event could wipe away happiness and change so many people's lives forever.

It was May 7, 1968, a beautiful spring day. I was three months pregnant, expecting my first child and experiencing all the happiness in the world. It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon, thank goodness. My work day was over. As I left the office, I grabbed a newspaper and was on my way home.

My husband and I had plans to celebrate my birthday with friends that evening. While I was getting ready, Bill settled down to read the paper. He came in to ask me if I remembered exactly where my father was working, and then he read me the bulletin on the front page. There had been some type of mining accident in a small town in West Virginia. A very sick feeling went through me as Bill read the name of the town. That was the coal mine where my father worked. This couldn't happen —not to my family. A tragedy like that was something I only read about. It couldn't be my father. Why would God choose such a good man, such a young man of 46? He had so many things still to do; he had so much life to enjoy.

Phone calls were made, and the bad news was confirmed. A wall in the mine had broken, causing water to flood the mine, but the details were sketchy. The safety of the men was unknown. There was only one thing to do: go home, wait, and pray. There was hope.

My father had worked in the coal mine since he was a teenager. He had many opportunities to leave the beautiful green mountains of West Virginia, but he always returned because the mountains were his only home. He couldn't change what was in his heart.

The next day when Bill and I arrived home, we could sense the sadness as we were greeted by our family and friends. There had been no news. The mine was still flooded, but every effort was being made to get it pumped out. Not many details were known. Only the twenty-five men entombed below in the beautiful green mountain could know the horror. Were they cold? Were they hungry? Were they scared? Please, God, just let them be alive, I prayed.

Almost a week had passed, and millions of gallons of water were pumped out of the mine shaft. The endless hours were taking their toll on everyone. I wondered how these poor wives could hold up much longer; not eating, not sleeping, just sitting together under a shelter, they waited. What were they thinking? Were they remembering happy times, or were they just bargaining with God for a few more years with their husbands?

In the early morning of the seventh day we finally received some good

news; the water had receded and the rescuers had made contact with fifteen men a mile deep into the mine. As they were being brought safely to the surface, we thanked God for such a miracle and prayed our father would be with them. When the last of the fifteen men was brought out, my mother sat down to weep, but she had no tears left. My father was not with them. Hope was dim for the remaining 10 men. Could God give us one more miracle? There were no words to comfort us, and there were no thoughts that were happy. Most of all, there were no reasons to explain why such a tragedy had happened.

The next few days seemed endless. Agony and pain were on every face, as each person prayed for his or her own special miracle. If death must happen, please just let it come, all of us prayed. Or maybe it was just a bad dream, and we would awaken to find our loved ones safe. On the tenth day the water was low enough for rescuers to go another mile into the mine. God had performed a second miracle; six men were found together and alive. Each family secretly prayed they would be blessed by this miracle. As we watched the last of them being brought out, we knew our prayers had been in vain. Our father was not among the survivors. We knew we had to face the worst. God had made his decision. Such happiness for some families to share, but we were to share emptiness and sorrow.

Within a few hours the bodies of the four remaining men were found. The pain of waiting was over, and a new pain that would last forever was beginning. Dad had been killed in the beautiful green mountains he loved. How could we endure our suffering? Why had God chosen to end my father's life, and also that part of my life and my family's? Will we ever know? My mother is still searching for her answers, as is most of my family. I feel that the tragic loss of my father has to have some positive meaning. It could not have been in vain. Could it be to show us that we take each day for granted, never questioning tomorrow? Will we ever have comfort in knowing all the answers?

Fourteen years have passed, and yes, life does go on, but so does the pain. I've learned with all happiness there is also much suffering. Maybe the pain helps us to grow and appreciate each day. I don't think that just becoming 21 is so significant anymore, but each day has its own special value. In contrast with my sadness of the death of my father, I had the happiness of the birth of my daughter. Is it true that with the sadness of a death we rejoice in a birth? I hope someday to understand my loss, and perhaps the pain in my heart will disappear.

"JUNE CAN'T SLEEP"

Leath Ayn Shover, a school of humanities student with a major in English, lives at 2618 Hemoine Trail, Long Beach, Michigan City. She is a sophomore.

The car is being driven by a stranger —a familiar male stranger. June can't see his face, but she knows he is angry. He is in a hurry. He is screaming at a woman who is sitting in the seat next to his. The woman does not seem to be concerned. She looks out the window and compares the black sky to the gray street. June is sitting in the back seat, very small and rigid and far away from them. She is terrified, yet unable to speak. They are driving her home, but she knows she will never get there. She knows she will die before she can get there. The man is hysterical. He is less than one foot from the car in front of them. He is beeping, cursing, and threatening. He swerves into the next lane in spite of the on-coming traffic. As he pushes the accelerator to the floor, the car begins to spin. June clenches her fists and opens her mouth, but she cannot speak. She is helpless. The car is spinning so quickly that she cannot breathe. The woman is tapping her foot to the dissonant sound of the air circling the car. The man is picking his teeth. June's hands are white and furious. She shuts her eyes and tightens the grip her fingers have on her palms. She must appear to be calm —they won't notice her hands. She puts her fear into the palms of her hands and squeezes it to keep it there. If it stays there, nobody will know it exists.

June sits up. She sees a blank wall in front of her. Everything is white and quiet. Tonight is just like all of the others she spends in her square white room in her huge white bed. As she catches her breath, she notices that something, somewhere hurts. Something is stinging, and her eyes are beginning to tear. She dismisses the pain, overcome by the fear and anxiety she feels from her dream. "Do you know you're shaking, June?", she remembers when her boss asked that question and the shame she felt but hid. "Your hands are shaking. Why are you shaking?" She faded from the sympathy and concern in the eyes of the dozens of people who had asked those questions. For Christ's sake, she thinks, of course she knew she shook, but why must they constantly acknowledge it? She looks down at her hands. They are still clenched. She opens them slowly and cringes when she sees the bloody indentations her nails have made in her skin. Then she begins to cry. Crying calms her.

June lies smoking in her bed. She is unable to sleep, unable to turn off her brain —thinking and understanding many different thoughts simultaneously —unable to let herself waste this time that she calls her life by being unconscious. Because when her life was over wasn't she to be endlessly unconscious, unconscious without the company of dreams —dreams that occasionally become anxiety-ridden horrors in which no comfort was found but that of waking and realizing it never really happened? Never happened to her body, at least. But is a physical experience more real, more important, more justifiably feared than one created so deeply within the mind?

She realizes her cigarette is burning her fingers, and she lights another one,

she anticipates tomorrow. Each day, as she dresses for work, she prepares herself for the accident. Tomorrow, she promises herself, she will not think about it. She will not picture the accident, feel the helplessness, the anger at such negligence, and she will not see herself dig her nails into her palms in an effort to make one last intentional move before being subjected to the will of the crash's impact. She will not let herself lie awake tonight and think it is possibly her last night alive. Her fear manifests itself in the horror of the accident, not in the fear of death. She is not afraid of death. June had studied many different theories about the after-life experience. She had converted her reincarnate ideas to Christianity for its glamour and safety, but that was years ago and long since abandoned. No, she thought, she is not preoccupied with her physical death, not selfish in mourning the world's loss in her non-existence, she is not afraid to die —she is afraid to crash. And her obsession with this fear is more frightening than the fear itself.

Strangely, when the pain from the emptiness of the fear reaches an intensity that is unbearable, she finds solace only in driving. She sneaks out into the darkest hours of morning to drive until the sun rises. Tonight she puts on her coat, kisses her dog, and gets into her car where she immediately feels safe. She drives slowly, not seeing the road but appreciating the sensation of movement and the bite of the damp air mixed with the hot smoke inside her lungs. She wonders if it is possible for lungs to shrink, for hers seemed to be constantly getting smaller, tighter within her heavy white chest. Or is it her chest that is getting smaller around her pounding lungs, she questions, remembering that this is how they feel when she dances. Then suddenly she wonders why so many people refuse to dance, for they must certainly have yearned to at times. Dancing makes June happy. It's the only form of art in which the artist becomes the work of art; once the dance is over, it is just a memory. It is not possible to hang a dance in the Louvre. And she asks herself —if those people who want to dance let their self-consciousness reject it, where are their dances? Where are those dances that were inside of them but were not let out? Is there a place in their hearts? Surely a dance is not a calculated product of the mind, where hundreds of lonely dances collide and weep?

Feeling a loss for these people, she remembers a cab ride she once had. The driver was gray and tough-skinned. He had the physical anonymity that is cultivated by a professional whose job forces him to greet dozens of strangers every day. On a grossly impersonal level his passengers speak to each other as if he were not there, and after years of their indifference, he believes them. She remembers this cabbie not because of his resemblance to the cab, but by the care and grace with which he drove. She complimented him on his driving, and he began to tell her his story.

He had been a ballet major in college, a man who found total satisfaction in the experience and theory of dance. But he was drafted into the Vietnamese War where he was seriously wounded. His heart was left in a fragile state. If he ever physically exerted himself, he was warned by doctors, he would die. He returned to the United States unable to continue his life as a dancer. He unsuccessfully attempted many different jobs to find a way to express his need for the

graceful harmony of movement. She remembers how seriously he explained the joy he felt when he discovered a way to dance with his cab. And it was true: he drove as if the cab were an extension of his body —his turns were gentle glides and lovely pirouettes; his stops were timed and smooth. She recalls with embarrassment that she impulsively kissed his hand after she paid him and hoped nobody had heard her whisper, "Please don't let anyone hurt him."

June looks up at the light and sees that it has turned green. She decides to pull over and turn around. It is close to five, and she likes to be on Lake Shore Drive at dawn. If there is such a thing, she thinks she must be an emotional whore. She can't help herself from embracing and mourning the pain of anyone who lets her near them. Her mother calls it "emotional masturbation", believing that June is one of those people who pathetically thrives on sadness and disaster; one who searches for and accumulates these precious sorrows just to milk them for every possible tear. June refuses this theory, not without acknowledging the humor in the parallel. But the action in masturbation is a chosen one, a decided one, and she does not decide to feel empathy as she does not decide to dream.

She feels herself finally becoming tired as the sun rises over the lake. She drives carefully, a bit envious of the warm peacefulness emitted by the passing rows of closed, dark houses. She knows she must go home. The thought of being in that white room depresses her. There is a smell in the deathly quiet of the room that makes June sick. She lights another cigarette and counts the hours until she must go work; until she must climb into the car from her nightmare. And she hates herself because she can't control her fear.

Sitting in her driveway, she digs through the ashtray for a couple of long butts and feels nauseous thinking of the humiliation her paranoia makes her feel. Is it the humiliation that makes it so awful? Is the worst thing about her phobia the obvious lack of control it forces her to display? Christ, how she fought for control —the one thing that would ensure her life to be successful and productive. She resents the power this fear has over her just as she resents the power her emotional sensitivity has over her. She played games with herself to try not to care so much about people. If she could not be in control of her feelings, she wanted to be able to pretend she was. But she was a failure. "Should I close the window? You're shaking." Yes, she thinks, I'm shaking. Look at June, she's shaking. Let's all watch her shake. Let's all watch June's body betray her.

Suddenly, June feels overcome by panic. She gets out of the car, walks to the house, and stands in the hallway in front of her bedroom door. She is afraid to open it. It's just a room, she tells herself; get a hold of yourself. Her right hand slaps the side of her face, and her left hand turns the knob to open the door. At once the smell of the room hits her, hurts her, causes her temples to throb. There is an echo in the corners of the smell that is too loud. I hate this room, she thinks, and I am this room. I am clean and white and quiet, but there is a stench surrounding me that only I can smell. It beats into my skull as if my insides were rotting. There is too much pressure on her head; the smell is booming behind her eyes, and she can't turn it down. She races to her bureau and pulls

open the drawers. She wonders why she always hides the scissors, wonders why she thinks each time will be the last. She is afraid of herself and afraid of the scissors. But she finds them. They're there because they have to be there.

June's fingers close tightly around the scissors. She is in control of them. She bends her neck over the garbage bag and begins the ritual. She grasps handfuls of hair and cuts it at the roots. There is too much pain inside; it is too loud and confusing. If she rearranges some of the ugliness —puts some on the outside —she will get relief. It is deceitful to look so pure when her insides are full of violence and bile. She must displace it, relocate it, create a semblance of balance. Cut it off; then there will be less to feel! Cut it off; then there will be less to hurt! Cut it off; you don't deserve to look normal! You aren't normal. She pulls hard, wanting to feel physical pain, and sobs as she hacks off the last hunk.

When she looks up at her wet, red face in the mirror, she feels satisfied, triumphant, and exhausted. Yes, she has ruined her disguise and spoiled the game, but she won't have to pretend anymore. She is the unheralded, self-proclaimed sineater. Now there is room for no more. It's 7:00, and she has half an hour until she must get ready for work. She sticks the scissors under her mattress and climbs into bed. Everything is white and quiet. The only smell left is inside of a small paper bag in the corner of the room. She can throw it away when she gets up. As she drifts into sleep, she thinks about the car and the accident. She can handle it now, she is certain. She just won't let herself think about it. She falls asleep with feelings of power and control.

There is a cigarette burning in the ashtray. The room is bright with the morning sun. June's brother is taking a bath, her dog is being fed, and her mother is making coffee. June lies small and pale in her big white bed. In her sleep she sees a car. The car is being driven by a stranger —a familiar male stranger. June can't see his face, but she knows he is angry. He is in a hurry.

*"... AND THOU SHALT LIVE BY THE COMMANDMENTS OF TORAH,
BUT NOT DIE BY THEM: THE THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF
THE HOLOCAUST"*

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It is easy for twentieth century scholars to negate the existence of God by using the Holocaust as an example of negative theology. It is, however, an even greater injustice to the victims to allow Nazi Germany that one victory.

The best example of Jewish resistance during World War II was the singing and chanting voices of millions going to their deaths with the Ani Ma'amin ("I believe with perfect faith . . .")¹ on their lips and in their hearts. Jewish theology is one based on the contractual agreement between God and man at Mount Sinai. Aside from the tablets received from God, an agreement was struck between God and Israel encompassing laws that would make Israel unique among the nations. Unfortunately, that same uniqueness has caused the Jewish people to suffer tremendously through history. It was their theology, however, that was their comfort and the stronghold of their faith through difficult times. The religiosity of the Jews in ghettos and concentration camps was, for the most part, forged even stronger by the intensely arduous experience of being fuel for Hitler's Final Solution. Hitler was not just destroying Jewry; he was also trying to destroy personal, concerned God of Israel. Using centuries of Christian anti-Semitism as justification for genocide, Hitler set out to prove that God was not concerned for His Chosen People and had no sense of justice or morality; and what is God if not just and moral? "The reality of the witnesses of God (the Jews) aroused the venom of those whose avowed purpose it was to build against God."² Hitler had his victory in the sense that the God of Israel did not descend to save the burning children, the old, or the infirmed. He proved there was not spiritual reality for Jews. By negating the Jewish God, however, he also negated his own German Christianity. Without Jews, there would be no Christianity; how could one exist on the bones and ashes of the other? Without a spiritual realm of reality, the existence of man's values becomes absurd. "Indeed, the existence of man becomes meaningless without the existence of God."³

The religious fervor of the Jews who lived and died in the ghettos and camps was, in most cases, strengthened by the same humiliations and degradations that were supposed to destroy them completely. Unlike their Christian neighbors, the Jews of Europe had, for generations, known only one way of expressing their Jewishness: by living in a communal existence in the presence of God. The Jews of Europe lived and died with the convictions of their faith firmly intact, even though their tormentors taunted them with the horrible truth that their God had abandoned them. The nihilistic thinking that arose from this experience is perhaps the saddest tragedy of the Holocaust.

The theology of the Holocaust does not differ greatly from the theology at hand during other times of great martyrdom for the Jewish people; for the

destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, the Spanish Inquisition, the pogroms of Tzarist Russia, the expulsions and oppressions documented throughout history have all failed to destroy the Jews and their theology. The Holocaust differs from these examples only in terms of its magnitude. Jews throughout history have had to contend with a silent God, the sanctification of His Divine Name (Kiddush HaShem), and the essence of a God who allows evil to exist in this world.

The question most asked by students of the Holocaust is "Where was God?" Elie Wiesel, himself a survivor of Auschwitz, redefines this question by asking "Where was man?"⁴ Because the Holocaust is the ultimate example of man's inhumanity to man, to ask the whereabouts of a Divine Presence is to ignore the facts of the occurrence. Many people, many countries, many religious leaders remained silent even though they knew what was happening behind camp and ghetto walls. None of the Allied Armies tried to stop the transports crisscrossing Europe. The Nazis had a joke about sending their own troops to the front lines in cattle cars marked "Jews for extermination"⁵ to guarantee a safe journey for their men, for they knew no one would try to stop the implementation of their Final Solution. The silence of the world was a acquiescence to centuries of Christian anti-Semitism. Hitler presented his Solution as a favor to good Christians everywhere. Their inaction was his applause.

The only people entitled to question God's whereabouts during the Holocaust are the victims of its insanity. This questioning process is as old as the Jewish people themselves. In the *Book of Job*, Job questions God about the iniquities which befall him as a result of a wager between God and Satan. Unaware that he is a pawn in a great cosmic chess game, Job finds that his faith is being tested by the God to whom he has dedicated his life. Although his faith is not shaken, Job believes it his right to demand an explanation from God. God answers him from out of a whirlwind:

Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?
Gird up thy loins like a man;
For I will demand of thee, and
declare thou unto Me.
Where wast thou when I laid the
foundations of the earth?
Declare if thou hast the understanding . . .
Shall he that reproveth contend
with the Almighty?
Wilt thou even make void My judgment?
Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou
mayest be justified?
Or hast thou an arm like God?

When speaking of God's absence at Auschwitz, we must be sure the question is being asked by one who believes —one who has faith in a living, compassionate God. For an atheist or an agnostic to ask this question would be an immutable folly. The Holocaust can neither define nor exclude God's ex-

istence. Job questions God, not from a standpoint of disbelief, but from a commitment to God. Since Sinai, Jews have had a contractual agreement with God to live according to Torah.⁷ Intrinsic to this contract is man's right to question God for what he sees as injustice without reason. It does not mean man will be answered as Job was; it means man has the right to ask. To question God's existence because of His perceived absence is like a child alone questioning a parent's existence at a time of peril; the parent's existence and absence cannot be explained in the same terms.

The contractual agreement Judaism has with God is not one built on logic. One can follow the Aristotelian mode of divining the essence of Truth and reject God's existence through a process of logical argument, but the essence of Judaism is not concerned with proving God's existence. The real essence of Judaism lies with the dialogues between God and man: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, for example. If Divine Presence is felt through the actual awareness of God, then faith is unnecessary. If, on the other hand, man trusts God's partnership in the covenant of Sinai, then that trust becomes his faith. The essence of faith, then, is the ability to transcend the absurdity of life and take a leap of faith.

If God's existence is assumed, how is Auschwitz to be explained? Why didn't the compassionate, moral God of the Jews stop the evil of the Nazis? How is the existence of evil in a world created by a good God explained? If evil is defined as the absence of good (or good as the absence of evil), then these concepts become absolutes. Rabbi Akiba, a great Jewish scholar of the fourth century, explained it this way: If God created good and evil, then by definition of a creator being greater than his creations, God is above good and evil. If God is above good and evil, then He is obliged to follow the contractual agreement of Sinai and allow man to choose between the two. The existence of evil at Auschwitz was man's choice; God could not interfere. If God interfered with man's choice, evil would then have disappeared along with the existence of good; consequently, the existence of man would have no meaning or significance. Man exists with freedom and responsibility; without choice, man is no longer human.⁸

Millions of Jews went to their deaths with the Ani Ma'amin on their lips as part of the contract at Sinai. No matter what happens in the course of human history, it will not affect a faith built on trust. These Jews were expressing their total commitment to their history and to their people. It is called Kiddush HaShem —the sanctification of the Divine Name at a time of martyrdom. Even though martyrdom is usually associated with those who are forced to choose between their own ideology and that of an aggressor's, the Holocaust became the ultimate example of mass martyrdom. The Nazis were not asking the Jews to give up the faith of their ancestors; the Nazis were killing the Jews because they were Jews. The experience of Kiddush HaShem allowed the tormented to rise above their ashen world. If the martyrs could accept God's silence as an opportunity to prove their commitment with their whole beings, then they would achieve the highest and purest form of Kiddush HaShem. No one can love God more than one who has been abandoned by Him. The Jews,

facing their own obliteration, yet able to sanctify the Name of their Creator, were negating the victory of their murderers. God was not present, but His people were, and they were affirming their faith with every word. This is not to say no one doubted, no one faltered in his faith; many did, but who could blame those who could not face what they were asked to face?

As Hitler attempted to establish himself as the new Christ figure for Germany, the Jews became the anti-Christ figures. Apart from purifying the Master Race, the destruction of the Jews was used to signify justice against the Christ-killers. Even more ridiculous was Hitler's dream of becoming God's prophet for German Christianity. In order to assume a divine stance, Hitler had to demonstrate his power over God's Chosen People. By negating their God, Hitler hoped to signify his own divinity with nazism as the new religion for Germany. The encouraging acquiescence of the major religions of Europe exemplifies the deeply ingrained anti-Semitism that took hundreds of years to develop. How this acquiescence affects future Jewish-Christian relations still remains to be seen.

No effective dialogue between Judaism and Christianity exists at this time. To admit its unwitting role in the massacre of millions could easily shatter Christian theology. Some critics say the State of Israel is reparation enough for the Holocaust, but as far as the victims are concerned, there are not reparations that could negate the horrors of Maidanek, Bergen-Belsen, or Treblinka. If Jews had been offered the actualization of the State of Israel in exchange for six million lives, the offer would have been met with stunned silence.

Ever since the liberation of the camps, Jews have had to deal with the reality of the Holocaust. For some, it is the negation of any hope of demise for anti-Semitism; for others, it defined the extension of the Jewish spirit; for still others, it meant the end of God's existence and the end of Western civilization. For most Jews, however, the reality of the Holocaust demands that they remember Sinai and Auschwitz. Elie Wiesel says that memory is the Jewish legacy;⁹ "Never Forget" are the words of a people sorely crushed. To be a Jew after Auschwitz is an ultimate act of faith; to be a Jew after Auschwitz is a commitment to survive in a world that must share the blame for what happened. A Jew today has the responsibility to remind the world —and God —of Auschwitz, of Biafra, of Cambodia, of inequities and oppressions all over the world. Can the Holocaust happen again? Of course it can, and it will happen again unless man makes the realization that it is his responsibility to change. God did not die in the ashes of Auschwitz, but perhaps human morality did. The Holocaust must be used as an example of what man is capable of doing; he can either rise above human degradation or he can sink to its lowest level. Either way, it is man's choice. Elie Wiesel has stated it most profoundly:

Never shall I forget the little faces of
the children, whose bodies I saw turning
into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent
blue sky . . .

Never shall I forget those moments which
murdered my God and my soul and turned

my dreams to dust.
Never shall I forget these things, even if I
am condemned to live as long as God Himself.
Never.¹⁰

The theology of the Holocaust is unique only insofar that it survived Auschwitz. This becomes a testament in itself. For a theology to withstand the ultimate persecution and still be able to rise from the ashes speaks to the Jewish connection between past and present. Jews are witnesses to divine history and human history. Their theology transcends reason, logic, and plausibility. It becomes the scale by which all Western ideology can be judged. Modern society must learn from the Holocaust, but even more so, society must learn more from the persecuted than from the persecutors. The modern "God-is-dead" philosophy must be redefined as "man-is-dead." Emphasis must be placed on man's responsibility toward man. If Auschwitz must stand for something, let it stand for this.

¹The entire text of the prayer is as follows: "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though He tarry, yet I will hope for Him everyday that He will come."
David DeSola Pool, *The Traditional Prayer Book* (New York: Behrman House Inc., 1960), p. 734.

²Eliezar Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust* (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1973), pp. 117-18.

³Berkovits, pp. 72-73.

⁴Elie Wiesel, *A Jew Today* (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 61.

⁵Eva Fleischner, *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1974), p.9.

⁶*The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955), chap. 38:2-4, 40:6-9.

⁷The term "Torah" is used here to specify all the laws revealed at Sinai to Moses. Technically, the word denotes the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers.

⁸Berkovits, p. 105.

⁹Wiesel, p. 61.

¹⁰Fleischner, p. 11.

"MRS. SMITH AND HER GARDEN: A COMPOSITE OF
RABBIT'S WOMEN"

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Harry Angstrom in John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* is in perpetual flight from pressures around and upon him. The pressures emanate from a world of contradictions, and in the aged, crippled character of Mrs. Smith is the symbol of the world Rabbit yearns for, yet runs from. It is world that provides him with a feeling of self-esteem and a dread of entrapment. It is a world that views Rabbit as a spring of vitality and a mire of frivolity. The world is in place and in motion there in Mrs. Smith's home. She and her garden provide a glimpse of the paradoxical existence of Rabbit Angstrom.

Mrs. Smith's garden offers Rabbit the simple relationship that evades him elsewhere. It is in the garden that he feels a kinship to God; after all, it is in this interaction or intercourse, as it were, with the earth that he can plant his seed, and it no longer belongs to him. The seed becomes a creation of the earth and Rabbit has contributed, but he is not bound to serve it. Harry fails to realize, however, that just as the peonies and the crocuses and the narcissi flourish in beds hedged in by bricks, so too are his creations hedged in by the trappings of social rules and expectations. In that confinement is also Rabbit's responsibility to and for them.

In much the same way that he tends garden, Rabbit attempts human relationships, but he is thwarted because, of course, in the human relationship he is confined by the creation that grows from his seed. It is his daughter who brings him back to Janice, and at the book's end, it is his and Ruth's child about whom he agonizes and from whom he runs. He recognizes his responsibility as a parent, and the thought of Nelson without a father, consequently, torments him.

Mrs. Smith's garden is symbolic of the security that Rabbit reaps from a relationship. He feels secure there, "as in some secret estate," but it is symbolic too of his attitude that what he plants, even if that be children, is no longer his but belongs to those who can nurture it.

Rabbit is not the only recipient of pleasure in his relationships. Mrs. Smith receives life from Rabbit, as do most who come into contact with him. In a most literal sense, Rabbit does bring forth life within the women with whom he is intimate. In a figurative sense, however, he offers the women new life—to his wife it is a sense of security, of fulfillment, of direction after high school; to Ruth it is stability, respect, and genuine love after a life of prostitution; to Lucy it is the promise or the glimmer of passion after being cloistered as the wife of a minister. To each of these women he gives that same force of life that gives Mrs. Smith's old Bianchi its vivid pink, which against the other pinks "showed them up as just so muddy." Each woman responds to his lusty

presence and, for a time, revels in its delights.

Though Rabbit brings life to Mrs. Smith and others, it is a life that she does not accept. Though she yearns for it and needs it, she does not appreciate it. The Mrs. R.S. Halford is too pink; she prefers the white or red, but no pink. She does not even want the flowers that are there; she prefers alfalfa, real sustenance, not what Rabbit has to offer. What he produces for her is too short-lived; it flowers only for a brief time and, like a corsage, withers, leaving behind only greenery.

The superficial nature of Rabbit's love becomes similarly apparent in his other relationships. Janice, though she wants his love, does not want to admit to the individual needs that they possess. Wanting to experience a solid union that transcends physical needs, she angrily refuses to acknowledge the physical aspect of their relationship. Ruth is unwilling to accept Rabbit's love if it means living as his mistress, and Lucy is unwilling to accept his love if it means admitting it.

But just as Mrs. Smith, who, in spite of her hatred for them, maintains those dreadful pinks and worthless flowering plants year after year, so too do all the women in Rabbit's life submit to the momentary pleasures that he has to offer—ever hopeful that the next time will be genuine and permanent.

Although he derives a great deal of pleasure from Mrs. Smith and her garden, Rabbit finds himself ill at ease. He cannot understand that what he gives is not enough, but he can understand when he is being confined. He takes consolation in knowing that her grasp is as "a vine to a wall; one good pull will destroy it." He cannot let her grip become any stronger, for she is old, and he can feel that "unkind force" that drove her husband into the flowers. He is startled to discover later that this withered old woman is the vibrant subject of one of the paintings hanging in the house. She is the subject that is young, aggressive, and sensually stunning. He can still sense the presence of sensuality, but like the chocolate covered cherry candy melting in his hand, violated by an unappreciating taste, that sensuality is awkwardly held at distance by Rabbit, who then departs.

That reaction, escape through flight, is the solution to all of Rabbit's awkward relationships. When threatened, he flees, whether that threat be Janice, Ruth, Lucy, Mrs. Springer, or his mother.

Rabbit's relationship with Mrs. Smith serves as a looking glass in which one is able to examine the pattern of his thought and being. Mrs. Smith and her garden are inseparable; together they represent the other women. The garden is the opportunity that every woman affords Rabbit to become God-like and plant his seed, "to get rid of something by giving it to itself," to indulge in simplicity. Mrs. Smith is that in Janice, Ruth, and Lucy that desires the vitality of Rabbit's love, yet also rejects that love as insufficient. She is that in those women that binds and restricts Rabbit and from which Rabbit is in constant flight. She and her garden symbolize the relationship that Rabbit has with women—a relationship that thrives on the burnt stalks of its past and cyclical, probable fortunes of its future.



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